

Exercises and Techniques for Developing Independence and Coordination

We all know there is no magic or secret to improving your skills and becoming a better drummer, just lots of smart practice (practicing the right things, the right way). For me, there is one thing that I practice regularly in many different ways that I swear by, and that has had a significant effect on improving the technique, control, independence, and coordination for me and for my students – stickings!

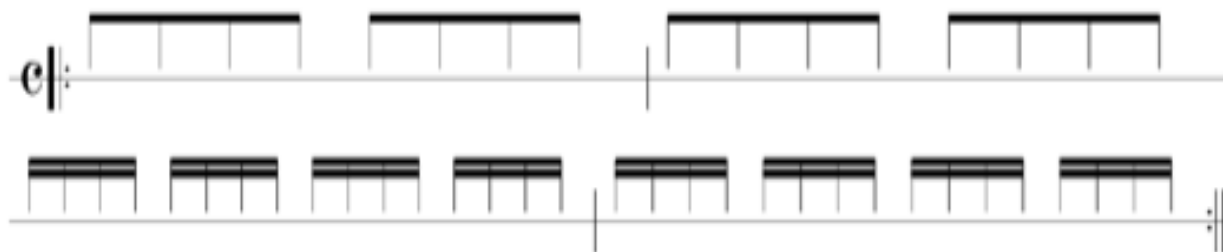
The ability to play a rhythm using many different stickings is an important one to develop for the drumset, as it allows us to play almost any rhythm or phrase using any combination of sounds and limbs, which greatly extends our creativity and musical vocabulary. Command of the basic sticking patterns, practiced as outlined below, will increase your hand-to-hand and hand-to-foot coordination, and your control in playing grooves, fills, and solos.

Below are the 7 basic sticking patterns of 4 strokes, where no more than 2 strokes are played consecutively with the same hand. These can be reversed and combined to create hundreds and even thousands of compound variations of multiple measures. At first play the upper note head with the right hand and lower with the left. Practice slowly with no accents, stressing smooth and even rhythm.

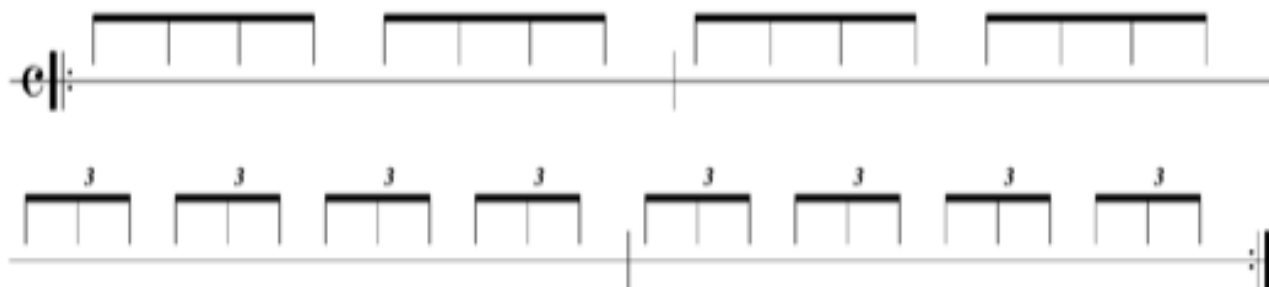
The image displays seven musical exercises, labeled #1 through #7, each consisting of a sequence of four strokes on a single staff. The time signature is common time (C). Each exercise is represented by a horizontal line with a vertical bar on the left and a double bar line on the right. The strokes are indicated by diamond-shaped note heads with stems pointing downwards. Exercises #1 through #6 each have two measures, while exercise #7 has one measure. The patterns of strokes vary between exercises, representing different sticking patterns.

- #1: Right hand (RH) on the first and third strokes, Left hand (LH) on the second and fourth strokes.
- #2: LH on the first and third strokes, RH on the second and fourth strokes.
- #3: LH on the first and second strokes, RH on the third and fourth strokes.
- #4: RH on the first and second strokes, LH on the third and fourth strokes.
- #5: LH on the first and second strokes, RH on the third and fourth strokes.
- #6: RH on the first and second strokes, LH on the third and fourth strokes.
- #7: LH on the first and second strokes, RH on the third and fourth strokes.

Once you begin to feel comfortable with these basic patterns playing them for two measures as 8th notes, you can add two more measures to the exercise, playing the same stickings at double the rate in 16th notes.



Now we're going to take it one step further, and add two measures of 8th note triplets using the same stickings. Once you start to play some of these variations on the kit you'll see how useful they are in creating very interesting rhythmic patterns and tension, especially as they cross the bar line. At this point, I begin to add accents to various notes of the sticking pattern (1st note, 2nd note, 1st and 2nd note, etc.)



Of course, now you can keep going with adding different rhythms and add two more measures of 16ths after the triplets, and when you really start to develop facility with these, you can even add a couple measures of 16-note triplets.

You've noticed that there are no R's or L's in these sticking patterns. That's because you can assign the notes above and below the line to any limb or sound, not just right or left hand. Here are just a few of the possibilities:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. upper note: RH | lower note: LH |
| 2. upper note: LH | lower note: RH |
| 3. upper note: RH | lower note: RF |
| 4. upper note: LH | lower note: LF |
| 5. upper note: RH | lower note: LF |
| 6. upper note: LH | lower note: RF |
| 7. upper note: RF | lower note: LF |
| 8. upper note: alternating hands | lower note: RF (or LF) |
| 9. upper note: RH or LH | lower note: alternating feet |
| 10. upper note: alternating hands | lower note: alternating feet |

When you've done all this then you can start to build some compound sticking variations, by combining the basic patterns (#1 and #2, #4 and #6, etc.). Ok, you get the idea...come up with some of your own variations.

Here is a critically important step...take these to the drumset and come up with some musical and creative ways to play them on the kit using different styles and tempos. Here are just two of the many thousands you can create:

- 1) Use sticking #1

upper note: RH
lower note: RF

Play continuous 16th notes between the RH on the floor tom and the foot on the BD, while improvising around the kit with the left hand

2) Use sticking #2

upper note: LH
lower note: alternating feet

Play 8th note triplets between the LH on the snare, with the feet playing the BD and HH, while playing jazz time on the ride cymbal with the RH.

Good luck and have fun!